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THE BY-PRODUCTS OF A CREATIVE AGE

Some ages are sterile; some are creative. Ours is one of the latter. To understand it, one has only to look back upon such periods as those of Augustus, of Origen, of Thomas Aquinas, of Luther and Calvin, of Rousseau. In all of these periods, the creative forces in society were easily dominant. It was then that men built up great states, great theologies, great cultures.

The history of the church can be read in these creative epochs and always in terms of the combination of earnest Christian piety with the best culture of the day. Speaking generally, the great body of Christian teaching which we call orthodoxy was produced by university professors who were also churchmen. At all events, orthodoxy was not a product of fanaticism or of obscurantism. The organization of each new doctrine was the outcome of virile thinking on the part of men who represented the really constructive culture of their day.

But all these creative epochs have had their by-products. The social mind from which has sprung the great body of Christian truth has been accompanied by counter social minds which have produced heresies and all forms of political and religious eccentricities. The creative impulse works sanely with sane people but extravagantly in unbalanced minds.

Each one of these creative epochs has been marked by a variant type of religion which, if not fanatical, was opposed to culture, regarded all efforts to unite religion and the current science as atheistic, looked to the speedy end of the world, and in many cases was marked by actual hysteria.

Recall the Montanists, the Donatists, the fanatics of the Reformation, the religions demanding jerks, "speaking with tongues," hysterics. These extremists do little really constructive

work, although they have been able to organize communities. They have shown remarkable degrees of censoriousness; but they have not stopped either intellectual progress or the development of the Christian religion as it enriches itself by finding truth in the various enlarging spheres of human activity. Where would our great body of orthodoxy be if Tertullian's diatribe against Greek philosophy had become the law of the church? What would our great Protestant orthodoxy have become if the chiliastic movements which dogged the steps of both Luther and Calvin had become really the dominant force in the church?



We are just now in the midst of an extraordinary attempt to force Christianity against the current of modern culture. Men are spending enormous sums of money to induce Christians to regard scientific thought as atheistic and any attempt to appropriate the results of scientific thought as a phase of atheism. The inevitable happens. Throughout the country we see extremists who are handling the Bible in the interest of ignorance and fanaticism, assailing bitterly those from whom they differ and alienating educated men and women from the church.

It certainly behooves those of us who realize the power of the gospel to assimilate truth, evangelize culture, and spiritualize the creative forces of society, to keep up courage. Hard names have never killed a great movement, and the gospel and the world of intellectuality are both too great to be stampeded by those who fail to enjoy the freedom with which Christ has set them free. Today's religious thought is not retreating and the extension of Christianity to social ills, despite all pessimists, is daily showing that the gospel is really the power of God unto salvation.



A religion is not dying that is growing more Christlike in sympathies and ideals.